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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2017  
TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: URIBE RESPONDS TO PARAMILITARY ACCUSATIONS AND  
GORE'S WITHDRAWAL

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer.  
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) President Uribe used an hour and forty-five minute live press conference on April 19 to address Senator Petro's allegations against Uribe, his family and his administration. Uribe's press conference was prompted by his concern that Petro's claims were damaging Colombia's image abroad, as evidenced by former Vice President Al Gore's decision to withdraw from an environmental conference in Miami due to Uribe's participation. Uribe said he would embark on a diplomatic offensive that will take him to the United States to counter the "smear campaign against the country." Meanwhile, a broad cross-section of Colombian politicians have spoken in support of Uribe and against Gore's decision. End Summary.

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Gore's Withdrawal, Tip of the Iceberg  
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¶2. (U) President Uribe broke with his past reluctance to give prime-time press conferences, and used an hour and forty-five minute live press conference to refute leading opposition Polo Democratico Senator Gustavo Petro's allegations of paramilitary ties against him, his family, and his government (ref. A). The press conference was prompted by former Vice President Al Gore's withdrawal from an environmental forum in Miami on April 20 due to Uribe's participation. Uribe said he could not allow Petro's accusations to harm the country's interests abroad. He would embark on a diplomatic offensive that will take him to the United States to counter the "smear campaign against the country." Uribe said he would not cancel his trip to Miami and that, before returning to Bogota, he would give a press conference (Note: In the press conference in Miami on April 20, Uribe invited the leaders of the U.S. Congress and Government to evaluate his government on what it has done and

not on the slander of the opposition").

¶3. (SBU) Uribe's statement during the Bogota press conference that the Administrative Security Department (DAS, FBI equivalent) and military intelligence have evidence his congressional opponents are using the allegations against him to try to sink the FTA in the U.S. Congress has sparked controversy. Petro has accused the GOC of abusing and politicizing the DAS.

¶4. (U) Several Colombian politicians spoke out in support of Uribe and strongly criticized Gore's decision. Congress President Dilian Francisca Toro said, "It is unfair that the (former) vice president is paying attention to unproven accusations about a president who has given his all for peace." Conservative Party President Julio Manzur said, "We have been seriously offended and we need to take action against the perverse initiatives to spread disinformation about Colombia abroad." U Party President Carlos Garcia said, "Any world leader...must take into consideration that in Colombia the institutions function, the justice system functions, the legislative branch acts, and the executive branch is able to govern." Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos, who attended the environmental conference in Miami, said, "(Gore) is very much misinformed...no one here at this forum understands why he made that decision."  
Drucker